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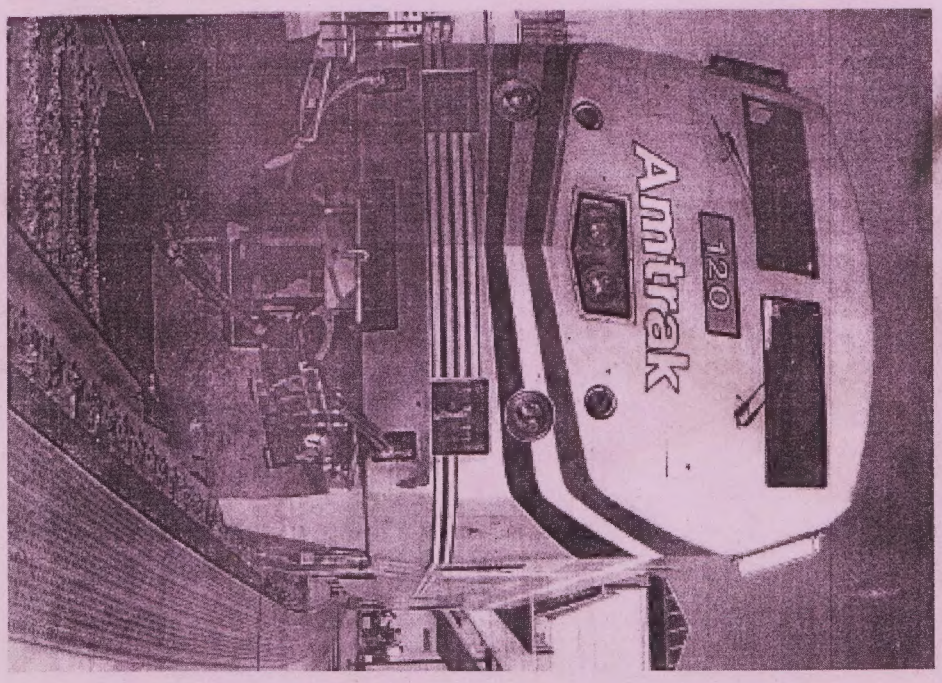

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

Rec'd. 8-27-2004

#662

CARS & CONSISTS

***Regional,** train 82, Philadelphia 30th St, Jun 19: engine 949 (AEM-7 DC); cars 81503 business, 43368 full dinette, 21001, 21060, 82022, 82529 (?), 82007, 82075 coaches (82529 must be new from the shop, as I have no record of it). Same, train 88, Wilmington DE: engine 914 (AEM-7 AC); cars 21947 business, 85000 lge/bistro/lge, 82526 (?-another one), 82070, 21181, 21176, 21268 coaches. Same, train 176, Wash DC Jun 21: engine 936 (AEM-7 AC); cars 81502 business, 85004 Capstone "blob"-painted lge/bistro/lge, 82031, 21104, 21683, 82502, 44921, 21650. Same, train 141 Baltimore MD: engine 651 (HHP-8); cars 28362 full dinette, 82063, 82513, 21205, 21690, 82503, 21165, 82062 coaches, 21033 coach as business. Same, train 186 Wash DC: engine 944 (AEM-7 AC); cars 48985 split cafe business, 44978, 21979 coaches, 28368 full dinette, 21792, 21021, 21702 coaches. This is a Metroliner set still kept together, but doing only 2 round trips per day now.

***Keystone** train 643, Newark NJ Jun 19: engine 4622 (NJT ALP-46); cars 21686, 82018, 82055 coaches. (NJT ALP-46's now assigned to Amtrak for 3 round trip Clockers Mon-Fri, but used on Keystones on weekends. 4605 was at Race Street engine tracks the same day; however, NJT assigns them, as an engine comes due for inspection, etc.)

***Acela Express** train 2254, Baltimore MD Jun 19: (Set #12) 2006 power car, 3410 end, 3516 biz coach, 3319 cafe/bistro, 3528, 3538 biz coaches, 3209 end 1st/galley, 2037 power car. Same, Ivy City Shop, Wash DC: (Set #16) 2012 power car,, 3205 end 1st galley, 3515, 3550 biz coaches, 3313 cafe/bistro, 3514 biz coach, 3407 end biz coach, 2013 power car. Same, Ivy City Shop: (Set #7) 2034 power car, 3419 biz end coach 3557 biz coach, 3301 cafe/bistro, 3556, 3553 biz coaches, 3216 end 1st/galley, 2032 power car. Same, train 2166, Wash DC: (Set #4) 2001 power car, 3200 end 1st/galley, 3507, 3508 biz coaches, 3300 cafe/bistro, 3519 biz coach, 3401 end biz, 3510 biz coaches, 3308 cafe/bistro, 3526, 3509 biz coaches, 3204 end 1st/galley, 2008 power car. Same, train 2159 passing N. Phila PA: (Set #14) 2015 power car, 3208 end 1st/galley, 3525, 3536 biz coaches, 3317 cafe/bistro, 3527 biz coach, 3418 end biz coach, 2010 power car. Same, train 2166 passing Rahway NJ: (Set #3) 2000 power car, 3206 end 1st/galley, 3504, 3520 biz coaches, 3303 cafe/bistro, 3506 biz coach, 3402 end biz coach, 2002 power car.—James Langan.

***Canadian,** VIA Rail train 1, Toronto Jun 24: 3 F-40 engines, 1 baggage, 2 coaches, 3 Skyline domes, diner "Emerald", "Empress" & "Imperial, sleepers "Chateau Closse", "Chateau Dollard", "Chateau Denonville", "Chateau Papineau", "Chateau Richelieu", "Laird Manor", "Burton Manor", "Douglas Manor", "Brock Manor", "Brant Manor", "Drummond Manor", "Dawson Manor", "Draper Manor", "Sherwood Manor", "Bliss Manor", "Osler Manor", "Lorne Manor", dome-obs-lounge "Revelstoke Park." Train on time or early at all major stops to Jasper. No switching of cars en route; entire train went to Vancouver. Train was too long for the Winnipeg station, and rear 6 cars did not reach the platform.—Peter Lichtenfeld.

***Silver Star "super train"**, train 92, West Palm Beach May 4: engines 82 & 175; cars 1222 & 1127 bag, 2511 "Pacific Peak" dorm-lounge, Viewliner slprs "Prairie View", "Bay View", "Forest View", "Mountain View", diners 8554 & 8521 back to back, Amcoaches 25102, 25053, snack car 2816, Amcoaches 25004, 25107, 25089, 25011. Train on time.—Marvin Doudna.

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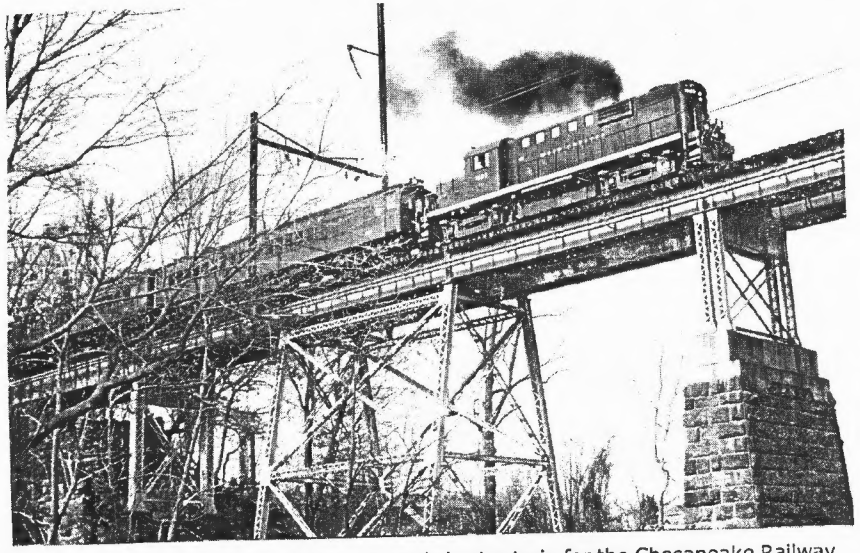
MAY 31, 2004

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

ON THE COVER

Three photos from the trip report by Ted and Sylvia Blishak in this issue in which they make a beautiful journey around the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. Top left: scene from the stern of a British Columbia ferry. Top right: the glamorous Panorama car on VIA Rail's Skeena. Bottom: VIA's Malahat Dayliner on Vancouver Island at the Esquimalt BC station. All photos were taken on the Blishaks' May trip.

EAST COAST REPORT



The West Chester Railroad ran a special charter train for the Chesapeake Railway Association on March 14, 2004 between West Chester PA and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. The trip was the Association's annual St. Patrick's Day excursion. The eastern portion of the line, between Elwyn and 30th Street Station (about 14 miles) is SEPTA's R-3 line; however, the portion west of Elwyn was abandoned by SEPTA in 1986. The train was comprised of four former Reading "Blue Liner" commuter coahces and a former PRR baggage car, and was powered by diesels on each end, with "Pennsylvania" GP9 No. 99 on the west end and ex-CPR RS-18 No. 1803 on the east end. Numerous photo runbys were made en route, and the second runby on the inbound trip was at the high trestle over Darby Creek west of SEPTA's Gladstone station, which is pictured above. Ex-CPR RS-18 smokes it up in true Alco fashion as it leads the short train across the trestle.—Alex Mayes.

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Amtrak changed the division boundaries of the NY Division, on the main line from NY to Philadelphia, as of June 7. The info was released in NEC Bulletin order #8-85. The boundary with the Mid-Atlantic Division moves from the west end of Morris Interlocking, just across from the Delaware River from Trenton, in Pennsylvania at MP 58.4, south to Croy Interlocking at MP 76. this is just north of Holmes Interlocking at MP 77.2, a distance of 17.6 miles. With this move, the CETC-7 train dispatcher in NYP will take over, from the CETC-6 dispatcher based in Phila. The CETC-7 dispatching area will now run from CP-Ham (inclusive), 2.7 miles south of the Hamilton NJTransit passenger station, to CP-Holmes (exclusive), a distance of 20.3 miles, which includes the small Barracks Yard, the 8-track Trenton station and Morris Interlocking, where NJ Transit's new Morrisville Yard branches off. A lot of traffic!

The only other change in this Bulletin Order relates to the Empire Service (NY State) for the temporary period (track work) of Jun 7-Jul 2. Train 260, a Mon-Fri working from Albany-Rensellaer to NYP, will operate 4hrs earlier at 10am in #294 Ethan Allen's place. No. 294 will then run in #260's place at 2pm, leaving Rutland VT at 10:45am as opposed to 8:52am. I like the idea, that Mr. Gunn has started, in the public timetables, of informing riders of detours or shutdowns due to track work by the host railroads.

Amtrak has ordered 10 new switchers from MPI/Wabtec, for delivery by the end of this year. They will be 1500hp MP15B's, a new design. These are the first new switchers in Amtrak's history, all others having been hand-me-downs.

I made a Father's Day trip to Washington round trip, down on Regional #195 Jun 19 and back on Regional #176 Jun 21. The opera was "Otello" and son David played Ludovico. The settings were a surprise, being in present-day Iraq, opening on a troop carrier with Ludovico as a US Ambassador.

Amtrak was on time in both directions, but it was hard to collect consists southbound, as it was a Saturday and there were very few train meets in stations. I was in Business Class both ways, and something new seems to have been started: placing the business cars up front behind the engine, followed by the food service car and then the coaches. In the past it was almost always on the rear and you could get the consist on its arrival at the station before boarding.

We were crowded both ways, so I couldn't walk through the coaches. Northbound on Monday it was easier, since you had to walk the full length of the platform to reach the car.

I noted both ways much track and tie replacement work in progress, especially on Saturday. The Newark station track #3, the main southbound express track, was getting a complete replacement forcing all trains, Amtrak and NJT, to use track 4, while northbounds were using local track 1, as the train was turning over track 2, Amtrak's normal track. Gunn's plan is to do 120 miles of replacement this year.

At Washington we stopped at the lower-level platforms, normally used for trains that continue south of there and #91 the "Supertrain" was loading on the next track—the combined Silver Star/Silver Meteor with its 2 diners, 4 Viewliners, etc. Looking back, I could see RoadRailers and MHC's on the rear. I saw the same train leaving Newark, as I arrived in Newark on my NJ Transit connection from home. Again I saw #92, the northbound version, on my return NJT train home on the 21st, rushing through Rahway at 3:30pm; it was due in Newark at 2:13. Not bad—down just 1.5hrs! I've seen worse.

Another surprise on Monday's return trip was a posting on the departure screens and gate poles of an Acela Express train 2100 leaving at 11:55am from Washington as a "TestTestTest" train with "NO Passengers". I couldn't see through any windows, and it was gone when the gates opened.

NJ Transit notes: Apparently deliveries of Comet V cars from Alstom-Hornell have started again, after the Buckeye Steel Castings truck bankruptcy, as we had four new

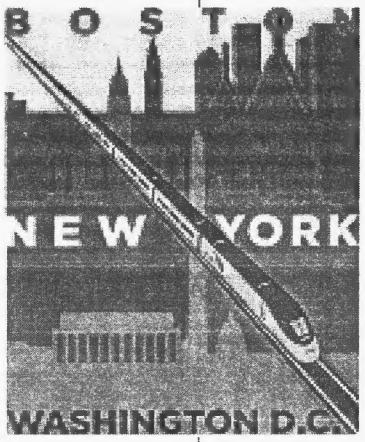
coaches—6494-97—on my train to Newark of the 6500-6601 series, but still no sign of the 6200-6218 series ADA rest-room coaches. Metro-North's 65-car order of V's for West of Hudson services are supposed to follow the NJT order and then the NJT order for 100 bi-levels. NJT announced that 4 prototype bi-levels are scheduled to go to Pueblo CO for testing and acceptance next summer, with deliveries to begin in 2006. NJT's 79 cab-car V's are all delivered, many running as coaches on current trains.—James Langan.

• • •

During the Democratic National Convention in Boston Jul 26-29, the MBTA planned to make random checks of baggage carried by patrons. Civil rights advocates, including the ACLU, were threatening lawsuits against such search activity.

City of Baltimore in mid-July sued CSX for $10 million, claiming that the railroad's July 18, 2001 derailment in the Howard Street tunnel, and ensuing chemical fire, caused major damage to the city and its economy.

NY's Penn Station director of terminal planning, Amtrak's Clark Hampe, 59, was profiled in the NY Times Jul 7. He was busy planning for the Republican convention Aug 30-Sep 2 and couldn't release any classified details of plans for security reasons. The Times also reported that he is finishing a new overall operating plan for Penn.



Amtrak appears to be abandoning the plan to move from Penn into the Farley Building, the former post office, and the House is moving to withhold funding for that project.

Amtrak is selling posters of its "award-winning" Acela ads. Said VP-Marketing and Sales Barbara Richardson on July 19: "You know you're doing something right when your advertising—in and of itself—can generate revenue." The posters are for sale on Amtrak's website at amtrak.com/store. There are four posters: a Boston poster, a NY one, a Washington version, and one (shown here) that features all three cities. The set of four costs $15.

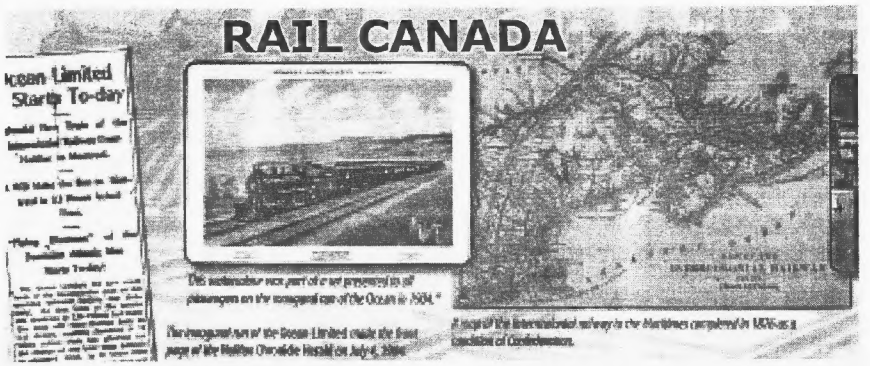
The Keystone Corridor will see improvements. PA Gov Rendell and Amtrak President Gunn July 20 announced an improvement plan for the Philadelphia to Harrisburg route, to cost $145 million. Speeds will be raised to 110mph and there will be more trains, with push-pull operation. All-electric operation will be restored and roadbed improvements will be made. Besides track and tie work, electronic traction cables, communications equipment and bridges will be upgraded. The work will take two years.

New York's request to use $2 billion of its 9/11 aid money towards construction of a $6 billion rail connection from the World Trade Center site to the Long Island Rail Road and Kennedy Airport has been approved by the Administration. The plan is to use the existing AirTrain rails at the airport, a viaduct in the median of the Van Wyck Expressway and LIRR tracks toward Brooklyn, with a 3-mile tunnel under Brooklyn and the East River. The project should be completed by 2013.

Maryland's MTA on June 28 reopened six light rail stations between Camden Yards and North Linthicum that were closed in late Feb due to construction of a second track. Light rail patronage fell somewhat during the closures. Two miles of the track were completed then, and the remaining stations: Linthicum, Ferndale, Cromwell Station, BWI Airport and BWI Business Center, will reopen this fall. Later, construction and closures will move to the northern part of the light rail line.

Extraordinarily heavy rainfall occurred in the NE this summer, causing flooding and transportation disruption. One unusual incident: a Washington Metro Red Line train the night of July 27 became stranded for 30mins in a tunnel near Forest Glen station when communications were out.

RAIL CANADA



VIA Rail's Montreal-Halifax train, the Ocean, celebrated its 100th anniversary on July 3. The train first belonged to the Intercolonial Railway, which became part of Canadian National in 1919 and VIA in 1978.

Shown above is a portion of an anniversary poster VIA produced this year. Historical notes on the poster inform us that the train was originally the Ocean Limited, named in a public contest, and starting life as a summer supplement to the Maritime Express. Said VIA, "Today, as in 1904, the Ocean still travels the same 841 miles of tracks along the St. Lawrence River, through the Matapedia Valley, and linking the cities of Campbellton, Moncton, Truro and Halifax. It is the longest-running regularly scheduled and named passenger train in Canadian history."

VIA planned to place into service on July 15 the third and last of the sets of Renaissance equipment on the train. The last set was to go on in summer 2005, but VIA fast-tracked the process in order to avoid using two different types of equipment on one run, which would add to logistical problems.

As a result, consists were shorter, being a baggage car, 3 coaches, a diner with a service car on each side, and 5 sleepers, since not all cars were available yet.

VIA is marketing the train towards the leisure traveler to increase revenues. Previously, 80% of its patronage was from "basic transportation" users.

Revenues and ridership of VIA for Jan-May show improvement. Said VIA, "After a disastrous month of March, revenues and ridership have been on a positive trend since April, although they have remained below budget. 'We are benefiting from improved leisure and "visiting friends and relatives" travel markets while continuing to feel pressure in the business market from low-fare airlines,' said Marketing director John Udell.

"At the end of May, train revenues were $4.9 million below budget systemwide and marginally below last year. During the same period, operating expenses were $3.7 million better than budget, resulting in an operating deficit of half a million dollars, an improvement compared to the $1.4 million shortfall recorded at the end of March."

Revenues on Western services exceeded both budget and prior-year levels for the first time since April 2002.

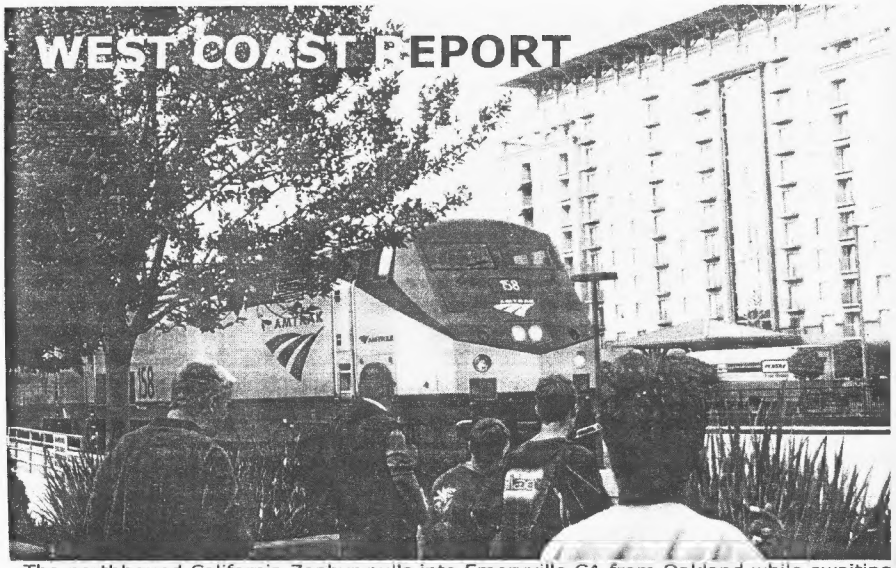
Ridership year-to-date results were below budget in all markets expcept SW Ontario, where the airlines offer the least competition. But in May there was an increase of 6.2% overall thanks to good Corridor and Western performance.

On-time perf was below budget in all areas, from 10.1% to 21.3% down.—VIA.

• • •

VIA Rail does many things right, but in RTN's opinion, with timetables it should emulate those of Amtrak, which are far more user-friendly than VIA's. The current system timetable, dated May 23, is typical: the schedules are in difficult-to-read airline style, some of the print is too small, and worst, the booklet format has binding problems, so that it buckles and won't open flat, making it difficult to read print that's near the binding. The only advantage we can see: the booklet fits nicely in a vest pocket. On the other hand, Amtrak's may be the very best-designed train timetable ever created.

WEST COAST REPORT



The northbound California Zephyr pulls into Emeryville CA from Oakland while awaiting patrons watch on an August 2003 day. RTN photo.

The Southwest Chief eastbound at Barstow CA May 17 was met by a gang of juveniles on the platform, who harassed two passengers out on a smoke break. The conductor and assistant, going beyond the normal call of duty and putting themselves in jeopardy, intervened and prevented a fight. They called police, and a BNSF Special Agent and Barstow Police arrived. They found the gang had vandalized outdoor benches. One of its members, ticketed, carrying a weapon, was aboard the train and was hauled off by police. The train was delayed almost an hour.—Gene Poon.

Las Vegas Monorail Co. opened its monorail in the Nevada city July 15 after a July 14 press run. The 4-mile initial line connects nine major resorts and the Las Vegas Convention Center with seven stations.

Caltrain's Baby Bullet express train service was given its official inauguration June 4, with regular service beginning June 7. On June 5, weekend service was reinstated after nearly two years of weekend construction. (See more details in RTN 661.) A featured speaker was state senator Jackie Speier, who was instrumental in securing 80% of the funding for the project.

The SF-San Jose (and now beyond) rail commuter line has been around for 141 years, and it now offers its highest level of service in all that time. For those living in express-stop cities, trips are shorter than ever, and for those traveling the SF-San Jose length, the time takes only 57mins instead of 1hr, 36 mins.

RTN attended the press event. Among the goodies handed out were Baby Bullet lapel

buttons, boxes of Caltrain mints with safety warnings and locomotive-shaped postcards. A "birth" theme ran through the entire program. Caltrain loco #925 was named in honor of Jackie Speier.

At 2:45pm June 4 the inaugural press run of a Baby Bullet took off, running from SF to Millbrae and return. The new bi-level cars were of course fresh and pleasant, the interiors suggestive of California cars, with tables, smaller than on the Cal cars, between some sets of seats. The Bombardier-built low-floor cars feature 2-facing-2 seats plus some individual seats. The cars have restrooms and eating and drinking are permitted. There are 10 Baby Bullet runs each weekday (none on weekends). • • •

East San Jose light rail service began June 23, a 6.3-mile extension of the VTA's light rail on Capitol Avenue to Alum Rock Avenue. An enthusiastic throng of over 1000 people came out for the ceremony for the $435 million line. It was not lost on the media that this was a large crowd for a transportation event; only 200 showed up for an important Highway 101 widening project dedication last summer.

Residents of East San Jose and Milpitas were greatly in need of this transit service, and probably will use it in large numbers.

Altamont Commuter Express is reportedly negotiating with UP to run a fourth Stockton-San Jose train and is looking into extending its service to Sacramento on the north and Merced on the south. ACE is promoting its service by running a special train Sat Aug 7 to Great America and the San Jose Jazz Festival. RT tickets are $10 (or $12 the day of the trip).

ACE is also bragging that its 94.9% on-time perf (2003) is the highest of the state's commuter lines, and that it boasts a 51.4% farebox recovery (compared to 45.1 on Metrolink, 43.9 for Coaster and 34 on Caltrain.

Seattle's Sound Transit officials were pleased to receive a low bid in late June from Balfour Beatty Construction of Atlanta for retrofitting of the downtown bus tunnel to accommodate both bus and rail. The $82.7 million bid was 12% under ST's own estimate. It is for ST's 14-mile downtown Seattle to Tukwila light rail line. The bus tunnel will have to close for 21 months, starting Sep 2005 for the construction effort. The line is planned to open in 2009.

A Los Angeles non-profit group hopes to restore narrow-gauge trolley service between Angelino Heights, Echo Park and downtown L.A., and has purchased an 84-year old Yellow Car, once used on the line, to restore. To accomplish their plan, Angelino Heights Trolley Line Inc. must lay some new track, although old track exists under asphalt in some of the hilly Angelino Heights neighborhood. The looped line would be 5.5 miles in length. Service on it ceased June 30, 1946. The car, a Birney Safety Car built in 1920 in St. Louis, was saved from the scrap yard by a collector and later came to be owned by the Electric Railway Historical Ass'n of So. Calif. It is numbered 1030.

Los Angeles' MTA received June 1 from the FTA approval for $490.7 million in funding to extend the Metro Gold Line from Union Station to Little Tokyo, Boyle Heights and East L.A. After that, a contract was signed to start construction on the $898.8 million extension. Service should start in 2009.

California hi-speed rail bonds ballot measure has been delayed until the Nov 2006 election for fear it would fail this Nov because of state budget problems. It would authorize $9.95 billion in state bonds—$9 billion for high-speed So Cal to No Cal rail and $950 million for for light rail and intercity psgr improvements.

Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance sponsored a race between cars and public transit to San Francisco Airport June 17 in morning rush hours. From three starting points —Walnut Creek, Alameda and San Jose—commuters took BART, ferry + BART or Caltrain + BART, while others drove cars. In all three cases, the transit users were speedier. The time differences ranged from 3mins to an indeterminate time for a driver who got lost or stuck in traffic.

BART has painted 7 cars in rich medium blue with "Spare the air, ride BART" lettering, the first time it has gone with non-silver cars.

San Francisco's Transbay Terminal expansion plans may likely include the necessity of obtaining a valuable downtown property through condemnation proceedings.

Amtrak Florida to Seattle and Return for $135.70

By Walter E. Zullig

This might be a good price for a trip from Hollywood, CA to Seattle and return. But, no, this trip is from Hollywood, Florida to Seattle, WA and back! Early in March someone had given me the webpage link for Amtrak's auctions on eBay. I had been contemplating a Hollywood, FL to Houston round trip during early March so started watching the auctions with interest. Most of them entailed more than the run of a single train, for example, such combinations as Albany to Albuquerque, Cleveland to Salt Lake City. Just like all eBay auctions, there is a closing time and the bidding gradually increases. The high bidder at the closing time of the auction is the winner.

The second week I watched the auctions, a Miami-Seattle trip appeared with a minimum bid of $79 and a closing date a week later. Nothing happened for a few days, then a minimum bid was entered and soon increased to $81. After discussion with my wife, we agreed that I would try my luck and scratch the planned Houston trip in the event of success. So I entered a bid of $85. A day later it was raised to $89. Thinking a good strategy would be to wait until shortly before the closing time, I did nothing more until the final day when the bidding would be cutoff at 2:15pm. Since we had plans to be out that afternoon, at noon I raised the then-high bid of $127 to $135.70. We then left with little hope of success, as the other active bidders would have plenty of time to outbid me.

Upon return about 4:30 I found there had been a big surge of bidding in the last few minutes and the "winner" received the trip for $159. But lo and behold, there was another message from eBay advising that Amtrak had some extra tickets for sale and was offering me the trip for my high bid price of $135.70! I accepted the following day and was instructed to call a special Amtrak number to make the firm reservations and pay for the trip. Both the email messages and the auction rules advised that the trip must be via the Silver Star, Capitol Limited and Empire Builder with up to three stopovers including the final destination. All this took place around March 11; the following day I phoned the number and spoke with a most helpful Debbie Dworkin who made the reservations. She congratulated me on getting such a good price and mentioned that Amtrak is considering expansion of the eBay program. Two weeks later the Amtrak eBay Store was closed so I assume some folks at Amtrak came to believe they were literally "giving the store away." While this was taking place I was in email communication with the editor of a newsletter to which I contribute. I jokingly mentioned that he should hold the entire June issue open for a report on this trip. He became interested and when I made the reservations it was for the editor and his wife as well as me. [The Amtrak agent told me that they would be willing to sell a few more tickets for the identical itinerary at the same price.]

The itinerary entailed 24 hours on the Silver Star to WAS, about 6 ½ hours there followed by an overnight ride to Chicago on the Capitol Limited. The first stopover would be in Chicago for about 28 hours before continuing on to Seattle on the Builder. After consulting with friends in Indianola, WA, I decided to visit with them for a day and to detrain at Edmonds, WA, to catch a Washington State Ferry to Kingston where I'd be met. This would be the second stopover. The following day we'd take the Builder from SEA at 4:45pm overnight to Essex, MT for a full day at the Izaak Walton Inn. The final leg would be a 33-hour marathon from Essex to Chicago, a two-hour transfer there to #30, followed by a 4-hour transfer at Washington to #91.

Now, just to keep things interesting, about a week before departure Amtrak called to advise that #91's schedule was being changed temporarily due to CSX trackwork and that both #91 and #97 would be consolidated into a "Supertrain" leaving WAS at 1:40 pm, only an hour, 20 minutes after my scheduled arrival there. "It's a legal connection so I guess they'll have to hold it for you as it will be the last train of the day to Florida," she said. Later when I attempted to book a CHI-MIA trip on the computer it was refused due to lack of a same-day connection at WAS. So the connection was protected for those who had previously booked but not for new reservations.

The Westbound Trip

My wife dropped me at the Hollywood station on the morning of April 14 for the start of the adventure. The friendly baggage agent checked the one suitcase to CHI and mentioned that I should board the second train to arrive. Sure enough, a few minutes later a northbound Tri-Rail train came in running a few minutes late. Train 92 was spotted about 10:57; I kissed my wife goodbye and began recording the consist. Engine #2 was in the lead, followed by two baggage cars, 2 Viewliner sleepers, a diner, Amfleet II lounge car and four Amfleet II coaches. Apparently used to the Florida practice of ticket collection on the platforms, many passengers started getting their tickets out but were told by the friendly female conductor to put them away for collection after West Palm Beach. We departed on time at 11:01 but got only to the north end of the siding where we awaited a southbound Tri-Rail train. Our train was clean inside and out with everything in good working order.

While at FTL I noticed that heavy construction is in progress for the double track, elevators and Tri-Rail platform on the opposite side. We were more or less on time but were set back 5 minutes for a meet at Boynton Siding with southbound #89, running about an hour late. There followed some very slow running past miles of double track construction.

Lunch in the diner was called about 11:45. My companion was a gentleman from Fort Lauderdale enroute for a week of visiting friends and attending shows in NY City. The menu was a new one with prices somewhat higher than those in use on my trip south on #97 less than 10 days ago. The steak dinner now is priced at $19.50. For lunch I had a Jambalaya which was nice and spicy as expected. The service was a little slow but there was no hurry.

The usual crowd boarded at WPB where we departed 29 minutes late due mainly to the slow orders past the trackwork. Once on the Speedway, the beverages nearly flew out of their glasses as our engineer got up to the maximum 79mph which I later clocked from the rear vestibule. We had a 13 minute delay meeting half-hour late southbound #91 at Ridge siding south of Sebring.

A walk through the train indicated two rather full coaches, a third sparsely loaded and the fourth empty. The conductor advised the train would be nearly full after Jacksonville and indeed it was. A snack in the "Chicago Club" lounge car sufficed for dinner. This is one of the Amfleet II lounges rebuilt with an enclosed smoking area. This particular one has a large mural of an Amtrak train leaving Chicago; the glass walls around the smoking area have etchings for the Lake Shore Limited within a NYC-type oval, the Crescent with a half moon and Atlantic Coast Services with an ACL-type oval. Very classy.

I detrained and wandered around during the half hour stop at JAX. As usual for this train, we ran past the station and then backed on to 11 RoadRailers parked on a station track. The engine was refueled and another added because of the extra load. About 50 passengers boarded here. As an interesting coincidence, engine #1 was added to the front so Amtrak locos 1 and 2 now pulled the train!

A little over a half hour after JAX we passed the next point of interest up the line, the train viewing platform at Folkston, Ga. The lights were on and about 10 individuals were waving at the train. The following weekend the City of Folkston hosted a Railfest Weekend; they really go all out to welcome railfans to their community.

Somewhere between Folkston and Savannah I dropped off to sleep. I recall being awakened from time to time by a rather violent lateral sway that must have been due to track conditions as the car rode smoothly at many locations. Actually I had slept more than I realized since when I awoke at 7:05 am we were crossing some tracks and pulling into a temporary looking station. The conductor soon clarified things for me—"We just left Hamlet, NC and are over 4 hours late." The cause was complete failure of the CSX signal system for about 50 miles in the area between Savannah, GA and Columbia, SC. I gather the train had to stop and proceed at restricted speed and be talked by the interlocking signals. So I could see my plans for riding and

(continued on page 17)

Western Canada Rail Adventure

By Ted and Sylvia Blishak

May 17: **Victoria to Port Hardy by "Railliner" and Motorcoach**

Today's train — VIA Rail's "Mahalat Dayliner", on the railroad formerly known as the Esquimalt and Nainamo — is one we have never taken, but have been meaning to do since 1973. People have said that the scenery consists of backyards, graffiti, and view-blocking forests. For the past several years, VIA Rail has been projecting this train's eminent demise. Two years ago, the equipment was out of service while VIA refurbished it. More recently, a fire on one of the line's trestles curtailed service for a short time. This morning, we are finally going to do it!

After breakfast at the Chateau Victoria's 18th floor restaurant, the hotel van whisks us to VIA Rail's well-maintained and staffed Esquimalt Station, just five minutes away, for the Mahalat Dayliner's 8:15am departure. The two-car Budd "RDC 1 Railliner", to quote VIA's spelling, rolls into the station. This unusual Rail Diesel Car equipment has no locomotive. Each car has its own diesel engines mounted below the floor, with hydraulic transmissions driving the wheels. Built in the 1950s, the train has fluted stainless-steel sides; the front is painted in VIA gold. Inside, the upholstery and carpets look new, and are the same muted blue-green that decorates VIA's "Canadian".

The conductor looks at my luggage, looks me in the eye, and says, "Go ahead, load 'em on."

Travel Tip: Do not carry more than you can handle yourself on this journey. We are going off the tourist circuit into rough country now; no five-star hotels, no obsequious porters or bellmen will be waiting to assist us at every turn.

As we settle into a pair of seats on the right side, generally the water side, more passengers board until all pairs of seats are occupied, with at least one passenger per pair. One lady carries on two trays of potted plants. At 8:15am the train promptly whistles off, and our Vancouver Island adventure begins.

The Dayliner has comfortable, individually reclining seats. There is ample room at the boarding end to store heavy luggage, as well as open overhead racks above the seats. A stainless-steel push-button water dispenser, with those traditional cone-shaped flimsy paper cups that seem to whisper "1950s railroading," is at one end of the car. A tiny unisex washroom is at the other end. The original stainless-steel Budd plaque, warning: ***"Do not flush while standing in station"*** inside the washroom is missing (doubtless on some railfan's bathroom wall somewhere) but there is a hand-scrawled message on a piece of paper, done with a felt tip pen and taped it to the wall.

While there are a lot of truly creative graffiti on view as we leave Victoria, as well as a fair number of backyards, we are soon into the verdant countryside on this beautifully sunny day. Inlets, marinas, farms, and lakes abound as we gain altitude. Vancouver Island is mountainous, and while there are some stretches that are obscured by trees close to the tracks (a couple of frightfully recent clear-cut logging operations are attempting to solve that problem) there are glimpses of meadows, wildflowers, and snow-capped mountains. We pass by several tiny but neat stations, as we are entering whistle-stop country.

There are white-knuckle trestles so high over deep gorges that everyone gasps with relief once we've passed over them.

While there is no food served aboard this train, it does make a scheduled meet with a catering truck in Nainamo at 10:45am. Here we have an opportunity to get off and stretch our legs and enjoy the truly fresh air of May on Vancouver Island.

After the 15-minute stop, we whistle off to our next stop at Parksville, where our lady disembarks with the potted plants. At noon, 15 minutes behind schedule, we arrive into Qualicum Beach, at a quaint late- 19th century style country station. A representative of the visitors bureau, Glenna, greets the detraining passengers and offers street maps of the nearby village. The conductor, anxious to get back on schedule, assists us with our baggage this time, before the train moves off again and disappears down the thin, rusty rails back into the woods.

Qualicum BC station. Photos by authors

Our Pacific Spirit Tours bus is to pick us up here at 1:30pm, so we have time to explore lunch possibilities. Glenna graciously offers to let us store our luggage in her office in the station building, then gives us directions to Bailey's café, which is just a block and a half away. Here we enjoy dining al fresco on the café patio next to the city library and clock tower. Bright sunshine and cool fresh breezes make this village a favourite of Canadian retirees. Flowers abound, in plantings, in hanging pots, everywhere! Neatly trimmed lawns invite loungers to sit in the sun and enjoy their lunch hour on the grass. A policeman strolls by and picks up a fast food container discarded on the library lawn and deposits it into a trash can a few steps away.

I phone Pacific Spirit Tours to reconfirm our pickup and am advised that the time will be 15 minutes later, at 1:45pm, and that we should look for a mini-bus with the name Wilson's on the side. Sitting on a shady bench back at the station, surrounded by our luggage, we spot a large inter-city bus with the Wilson's name on the side. The driver stops at the curb outside the station parking lot, lets off four passengers, and drives away. I get a Pacific Spirit Tours representative on the cell phone. She tells us that was our bus, then calls the driver on his cell phone. In twenty minutes he is back, with apologies. His dispatcher had not advised him of our pickup, he explained.

Travel Tip: Don't even think about taking an independent trip like this without a cell phone, and arrange with your telephone company to have Canadian coverage if you're from another country. If we couldn't have reached the bus driver, our only other alternative would have been to charter a light plane to Port Hardy - and Ted doesn't fly any more.

From here we begin the 220-mile journey to Port Hardy, the north end of the road on Vancouver Island. (All the other passengers on the bus had boarded it in Victoria, not realizing that taking the train part of the way was an option.) We catch glimpses of jagged snow-capped peaks and blue water, but most of the route is through lumber clear cuts of the slash and burn variety, a sight which caused a great deal of grumbling among the passengers.

We check into the Glen Lyon Motel, on the harbor at Port Hardy. The tide is out, eagles and ospreys are fishing for their dinner, and we could use something to renew our strength after this long day. In the motel dining room we refresh ourselves with mugs of British Columbia Honey Brown Ale to wash down a hearty Salisbury steak with jalepeno fries.

We walk out on the breakwater which protects the boat harbor, where we find everything from rugged fishing vessels to a motor yacht which has somehow made its way here from New Bern, NC. It is very quiet: no traffic noises, no aircraft, no personal water craft. It is a temporary respite from contemporary life.

iMay 18: **Port Hardy to Prince Rupert by BC Ferry**

We always seem to carry an overwhelming amount of luggage, or "impedimenta", as Julius Caesar called it. Two heavy bags contain our portable office; laptops, printers, files, etc., so that we can keep in touch with our clients on our working vacations.

This morning it proves to be worth the hassle, as Sylvia confirms four clients on a Brewster independent vacation combining VIA Rail trains and the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. Next, she puts the finishing touches on an American Orient Express week-long Los Angeles to Seattle rail tour for another customer. All this is done before breakfast!

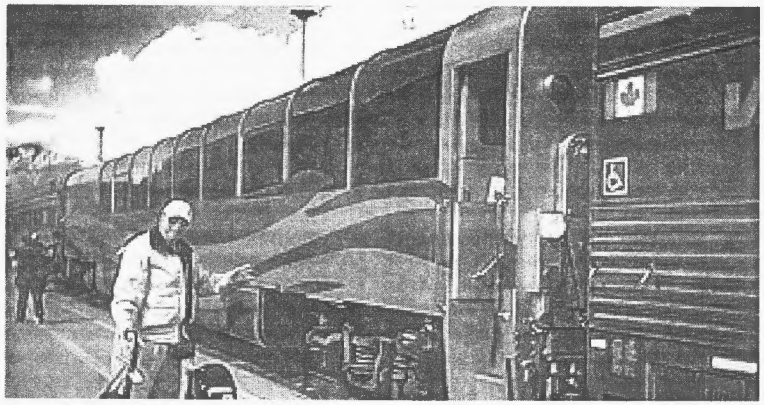
The Pacific Spirit bus arrives at the Glen Lyon at 6:40am to pick up a small group of sleepy passengers and their luggage for the 7:15am departure of BC Ferry's "Queen of the North" to Prince Rupert, her first trip this season. The classic white vessel with green trim resembles a miniature cruise ship. Automobiles and RVs are lined up to board. After we exchange our Brewster vouchers for boarding passes, we become foot passengers, check the luggage not needed on board, then walk down the same boarding ramp used by the vehicles. We are directed to a stairwell up which we must haul our luggage three flights from Deck 2 to Deck 5; although there are several men directing passengers, they don't offer to help. (But, we should have asked.) There we exchange the boarding pass at the Purser's Office for a key to our pre-reserved day room on Deck 6. We now find that there is an elevator, but its entrance on Deck 2 was blocked by vehicles by the time we boarded.

Travel Tip: Do request a dayroom at the time you make your booking; many travelers don't realize it is an inexpensive (about $27.00 per person US) option. The privacy and a place to take a nap are well worth the cost.

There are three classes of service on the "Queen of the North": deck passage, which entitles you to a seat in one of two seating lounges, an upgrade to a private "business class" lounge with key card access, or a further upgrade to a day room. The seating lounges have reclining seats with leg rests, the day rooms have a lower and upper berth, a writing desk, and a lavatory with wash basin. Although this vessel has been in service since 1980, it has been recently refurbished and exceeds our expectations. We expected a basic ferry boat, but find that it is neat, comfortable, and even has touches of elegance.

We settle our luggage into the day room and head for the Evergreen Restaurant where a hot and cold buffet breakfast is being served with nautical blue linen, china, and silver. The food is expensive, but excellent. Other dining options are a cafeteria and vending machines.

The morning is cold and overcast, and as we leave the harbor, we begin to feel ocean swells as we cross the open water between Vancouver Island and the BC mainland. After an hour and a half, we enter the Inside Passage where the sun comes out and the water is calm.



Ted Blishak alongside the Panorama lounge on VIA's Skeena train.

Out on deck, our face masks and windbreakers are a necessity in the morning. By later in the afternoon, the wind is with us and we enjoy shirtsleeve weather. There are a few patio chairs on deck, but most sightseers are leaning on the railing or sitting on the life vest storage boxes soaking up the bright sun.

The scenery in this fjord-like wilderness is non-stop, with only three tiny villages to be seen during the 15-hour cruise. If you become jaded by snow-capped peaks, tree-covered mountains and inlets, and waterfalls plunging into a deep blue inland sea, under an azure sky, you can always go watch CNN in the forward lounge.

Beginning at 4:30pm, Don Ross, a Mel Torme-style vocalist accompanying himself on the grand piano entertains in the Evergreen Restaurant cocktail lounge, returning later to play and sing during the dinner hour.

A week's Alaska Inside Passage cruise is, in some ways, compressed into a similar experience here on the "Queen of the North" but only takes 15 hours, and you don't even get to Alaska! It has become a very low-key, relaxing, and pleasant cruise. There are features the big cruise ships have that it doesn't, but we don't miss them: no crowds, no waiting in lines, no canned background music. No gambling casino, no port stops where souvenirs made in China are hawked, no dress code, no swimming pool, no spa. "But," dead-pans Ted, "I do miss the rock-climbing walls that some of the big ships have."

We purchase postcards and reading material in the well-stocked gift shop, which has the latest magazines, but mercifully, no newspapers. We are miles away from it all here, and the spell might be broken if cellphones and newspapers were an option.

In fact, our only concern is how we are going to get our heavy portable offices off at disembarkation. Ted inquires at the Purser's Office. We don't like to check our laptops, and carriers do not want to be responsible for handling them anyhow. We are advised that although they will announce when it is possible to use the elevator to the car deck, we may find it difficult to make the lengthy walk from the ship up to the terminal building. They tender assistance by bringing a BC Ferry pickup truck down to the car deck after all the vehicles are off-loaded.

When we finally reach the Prince Rupert terminal building, our checked bags are the last to be picked up, and there is one lone Skeena Taxi waiting to take us to the Crest Hotel.

It is 11:30pm as we hand our prepaid voucher to the perky young lady behind the reception desk. Soon we are in a comfortable room, but it is a bit overheated and there is no air conditioning. A call to the front desk, and the perky young lady has delivered a fan to our room two minutes later. And, believe or not, we have Wi-Fi Internet Access.

By the time we check our e-mail and retire it is 1:30am. We have a 5:30am wakeup call, and a taxi on request for 7:15am. By the time the sun comes up, we'll be at the station. At 8am, the "Skeena" will depart Prince Rupert for Prince George - and we'll be on board the Totem Deluxe Panorama glass-topped dome car.

May 19: VIA's new Totem Deluxe Class on the Skeena Prince Rupert to Prince George

May 19: the Crest Hotel, Prince Rupert.

Many years ago, when the "Skeena" was a three-car overnight train that passed through half of British Columbia's best scenery at night, we stayed at the Crest Hotel in Prince Rupert, BC. Located on a bluff overlooking the harbour, it is a cozy, homey hotel and we are sorry we are only here long enough for a very short night's sleep on this trip. When we plan this itinerary for our clients, we'll recommend two overnights in Prince Rupert - one to recover from the late arrival of the "Queen of the North", and then a day to explore some of the wildlife viewing or museum options here. Whale watching, fishing charters, and visits to areas where one might see Grizzly or white Spirit bears, are major activities here.

After we've had a refreshing four hours of sleep, Skeena Taxi arrives at the Crest Hotel at 7:15am for the transfer to the VIA Rail Station, which now shares the BC Ferry terminal at which we arrived. On our prior visit, we walked to the old VIA Rail Station just down the hill from the Crest Hotel,

getting caught in an unforgettable Prince Rupert cloudburst. The new VIA station is about three miles south of downtown.

The VIA baggage agent accepts two of our bags that we won't need until Jasper. The rest, against his advice, we will schlep on board our Totem Deluxe coach, VIA's official name for the 1700 Series Panorama cars.

Travel Tip: Don't plan on taking luggage aboard the Skeena except for the small overnight bag you'll need in Prince George. Panorama cars don't have overhead storage racks, and space under the seats is limited. There are only ten passengers in the car today, so we are able to store our excess luggage at empty seats.

These smooth riding, single level glass-topped Panorama cars were originally used on the short-lived "Florida Fun Train", then reappeared on BC Rail's "Whistler Northwind". VIA purchased the equipment a couple of years ago.

The "Queen of the North" is pulling away as we arrive at the terminal, and the grand little white ship sails away under blue skies and a snapping Maple Leaf flag, bound for Port Hardy. Several bald eagles fly over the harbor.

The Panorama car is probably the best equipment operating anywhere in North America.

A train horn sounds. The "Skeena" pulls in with an unusual consist. The GM F-40 VIA locomotive pulls:

A stainless-steel Budd-built baggage car.

A VIA 1 first class Budd stainless steel coach borrowed from the corridor east of Toronto, for coach—or in VIA's terminology—Comfort Class riders. Comfort Class is the low-cost service, offering coach seating and a snack bar.

The Panorama car painted with green swirls on a white background, for Totem Deluxe travelers. Totem Deluxe is the premium service, offering seating in the glass sided-and-roofed Panorama car, with meals served at your seat and access to the Park car. The view from the Panorama coach is excellent, through clear tinted glass, though lacking the elevated forward view over the rest of the train that only a traditional dome can offer. It gets an A+ for smooth ride, wonderful viewing, and comfortable seats. It is probably the best equipment operating anywhere in North America.

Round-end Vista-Domed "Strathcona Park" lounge/sleeper. (The sleeping compartments are not available to passengers; the train service manager needs one for his office and the others are used for storage of materials needed to service the train.) The VistaDome glass in the "Strathcona Park" is scratched and dirty so the viewing is not as good as in the Panorama car.

Our day in the Panorama car begins with a light breakfast served at our seats: cold cereal, milk, fruit, yogurt, a choice of juice, coffee or tea, and muffins and Danish pastries. There is a coffee pot and water pitcher located forward from which you can serve yourself anytime during the day.

Our stewardess, Sandy, completes meal service in the Panorama car, then moves to the VIA 1 Totem Class car to present the meal service there.

As we depart Prince Rupert, a derelict lumber mill is being reclaimed by the rain forest. Sandy points out a former fish cannery which is now a museum. These are examples of why Prince Rupert is re-inventing itself as a cruise port and tourist destination. Cruise ships returning from Alaska now stop here. One activity for passengers is a three-hour tourist train ride.

Once out of Prince Rupert, we've left civilization behind. But we do see some bears, loons, and beavers. Following the Skeena River and the Yellow Head Highway, the rail route passes through the snow-capped Coast Range for three hours, with mountains ever higher, culminating in Hudson Bay Mountain, (2560 metres) with its enormous Kathlyn Glacier. Then we pass on into the flat interior country, running along the shores of Rose Lake, Burns Lake, and Fraser Lake.

While there are few people in this remote corner of Canada, the Skeena does a mail delivery stop at a hamlet called Penny, with a population of nine individuals. The crew delivers a large stack of mail, including several large packages.

Our only disappointment on this trip is the meals, which are airline style. We'd recommend bringing along some power bars and other high-protein snacks to supplement the food.

We are running an hour behind schedule, so arrival into Prince George is at 9:15pm. At this latitude it is still daylight. We have a taxi transfer voucher to our hotel, but there is a crowd waiting outside the station, and no taxies arriving. Then one appears and stops to pick up people at the end of the queue, which naturally upsets those at the beginning of the queue. Then another taxi arrives and does the same thing, which throws the crowd into a state of confusion. We begin to reform a line to where the taxies have been stopping, then a cab stops at what was the original beginning.

We are on the Skeena's first tourist run of the season, and this may explains the confusion. But, at this point, we give up and walk our wheeled luggage to the Ramada. We can see Ramada's red neon sign, the friendly VIA Rail agents inside the station tell us it is only 7 short blocks, and we need the exercise after spending over 13 hours on the train. We are panhandled once, so we recommend waiting for the taxis.

Tomorrow, we'll reboard the Skeena for Prince George to Jasper.

May 20: Prince George to Jasper

After fortifying ourselves with a tasty hot breakfast in the Ramada Hotel dining room, we taxi to the station. The westbound Skeena is just pulling out for Prince Rupert while our eastbound train is backing in, and Sylvia has time for a few photographs of the equipment before we board.

Departing Prince George, Sandy is serving cold breakfast at our seats. Passengers are quiet and subdued this morning, perhaps they got only 5 ½ hours sleep as we did. This is a good time to take a nap in our comfortable high-backed seats before the scenery becomes spectacular this afternoon.

After our tasty cold roast-beef lunch, the Canadian Rockies begin to rise up around us, becoming more and more dramatic, culminating in mighty Mt. Robson, which at 3954 metres is the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. We've been lucky enough to see the top of the mountain on past trips (on all but about 10 days per summer, its head is in the clouds, as it is today) but it is stunning in its gigantic size nevertheless, and two of its glaciers are clearly visible. The engineer slows the train to a walk past the best viewing point, as cameras click and beep.

Rolling past eight-mile long Moose Lake we reach Yellowhead Pass, the highest point on Skeena's route, at 1131 metres, then descend into Jasper, the train's end point. Here we are met by a Brewster Tours bus and transferred to the Sawridge Hotel about seven blocks from the downtown station, at the east end of the main street, and located strategically across the road from the CN main line.

Only a few of the rooms have track views, available on special request, but we have a beautiful two-room, two-bath suite overlooking the woods behind the hotel. If we open our windows, we can hear the CN locos rumbling up into Jasper from Edmonton, as well as the whine of dynamic braking as lengthy freights descend the grade to Canada's Great Plains.

This upscale hotel has an atrium lobby and dining room, with broad skylights and a vast array of plants, giving diners the impression of sitting in an outdoor garden.

We retire early, looking forward to a morning tour of Maligne Canyon and Maligne Lake.

May 21:Jasper National Park, Maligne Lake and River.

Our Brewster Tours bus picks us up at 8:10am, then goes on to pick up passengers at other Jasper hotels before beginning a four-hour "Discover Jasper" tour, not of the town, but of Jasper National Park. A Parks Canada pass has been included.

Unbelievably dramatic peaks surround us as our bus follows the Maligne River south to its source at glacially-fed Maligne Lake. To the east is the front range of the Rockies, characterized by gray limestone mountains with strata tilted at a 45-to-80-degree angle. To our west is main range of the Rockies, with darker rock and multicolor streaks. In the valley between, the Maligne River begins at the north end of Maligne Lake and tumbles down several miles to Medicine Lake.

. Medicine Lake "disappears" and the First Nation people feared it. Today it is not full, its level about 60 feet below its high-water line, with a shoreline resembling a reservoir. The lake fills every spring with the snow melt, then its level gradually drops until it is nearly dry in the winter. Its only outlet is a series of limestone caves in the lakebed. These were somehow created by the lake's water after a massive rock slide blocked its original outlet. These caves drain the lake into the next phase of the Maligne River which then must descend several hundred feet to where it joins the Athabasca River.

The driver lets us off to follow the interpretive trail along the top edge of Maligne Canyon, which is so deep and narrow that there are few points where you can actually see the water, although one is constantly aware of its prescence by the steady roar of water plunging down the rapids and falls far below.

After the tour we have lunch at the Whistler Hotel dining room. The Whistler is in the village, and is conveniently located across the street from the VIA Rail Station. It is a budget hotel, but has most of the amenities that one would need for a Jasper vacation.

We strolled around the village, which is much smaller and less touristy than Banff. It appears that most tourists don't spend much time here, unless they are stopping at the rustically elegant and expensive Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge outside town, but are between train/motorcoach connections on the way to someplace else. We picked up a few supplies for the remainder of our stay in the Canadian Rockies, then strolled the seven blocks back to the Sawridge, where we would be able to enjoy our luxurious suite for nearly 24 hours before our next travel segment, VIA Rail's Canadian to Vancouver.

May 22 & 23, 2004. Jasper to Vancouver on VIA Rail's "Canadian".

Snow and freezing temperatures were predicted last night. While that didn't happen, it is overcast, cold and very windy in Jasper this morning. We cancel our morning walk, enjoy an excellent breakfast buffet, and return to the comfortable amenities of our suite at the Sawridge.

A Brewster bus picks us up and delivers us to the Jasper train station for the scheduled 3:30 PM departure of VIA's Train #1, the westbound "Canadian". As we pull into the parking lot, Sylvia says, "That train in the station is headed the wrong direction!" Sure enough, it is #2, the late-running eastbound "Canadian", which was scheduled to depart at 12:20pm but is just starting to board passengers. "That's okay, we'll be able to take photos," she concludes.

After #2 departs, some long, slow CN freight trains, pulled by grimy red, white and black diesels, grind through the station area. There is a great deal of freight on this line, and apparently delays and bottlenecks are accumulating, as they often do on the Union Pacific.

At 3:10 PM, an hour and five minutes late, #1 arrives behind three engines, the second one painted in the dramatic Spiderman 2 theme.

Before long, we are settled into Bedroom F in the 112 Car, smack in the middle of this lengthy train, which is at least 20 cars long. The consist sports four VistaDomes; three are Skyline cars which have tables and chairs downstairs and can be used as a coffee shop or lounge. Bringing up the rear is a Park sleeper/lounge identical to the one used on the rear of the Skeena. However, the drawing room and three bedrooms in the "Canadian" Park Car are sold to passengers.

Car 112 is just in front of a Skyline car and a single-level first class dining car. In the Skyline, a champagne reception with Niagara Falls Dry Sec and light canapés is getting underway in the upstairs dome as we pull out of the station. The attendent tells us she has to pour 20 bottles and most of us are happy to help. Running out of places to set things, she asks us to watch one of the bottles for just a couple of minutes as she puts it on Ted's fold-down tray.

We sign up for 6 PM dinner reservations. Sylvia has the roast turkey and Ted the salad greens and blackened halibut. The apple cake is what a pastry should be but rarely is, even in the finest restaurants: tasty, fresh, and moist.

It is a wonderful feeling to have the solid, traditional, 1955 Budd-built equipment under our feet again. It is possible to walk through the smooth-riding train without the constant fear of losing one's balance or getting thrown against the bulkheads.

The muted gray-blue-green color is still dominant in the "Canadian's" décor - consistent even to the bed linens — but new upholstery and rugs have been added since our last trip on the train and it is looking good with its Art Deco theme intact.

Brian, our car attendant, has our beds made up and it is a pleasure to sink into the thick, old-fashioned mattresses, and tuck ourselves under the duvets that are VIA's trademark.

We awake Sunday morning just west of Kamloops in sagebrush country. We are now five hours behind schedule. At the first breakfast sitting, we have a bonus. Instead of a rushed continental breakfast just before detraining in Vancouver, we are offered a leisurely meal and a choice of three hot breakfast items, including an omelet and buttermilk pancakes. "We keep some extra food on board, just in case," explains our waiter.

The other bonus is the scenery one usually doesn't see on the "Canadian" as we roll along beside the mighty Fraser River.

By 11 AM the "Canadian" has reached the outskirts of Vancouver, with its backdrop of snow-capped mountains. This trip, on our third VIA Rail Canada train, is about to end.

Hollywood to Seattle on $135.70

(continued from page 9)

photographing on certain Washington Metrorail lines going down the tubes and would gladly settle for catching the 5:20 departure of the Capitol Limited.

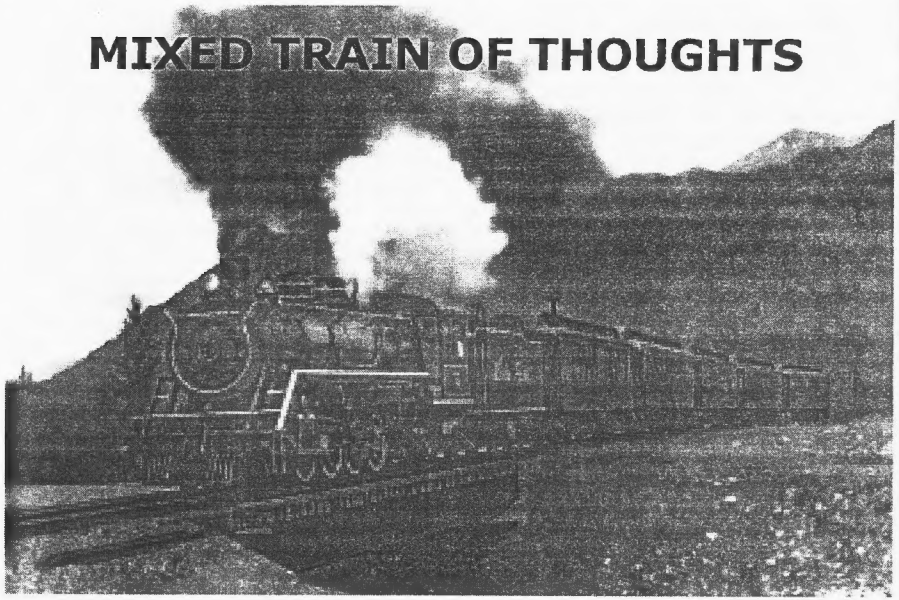
At 8am I decided it was time for breakfast in the diner. There were plenty of empty seats and a man from Daytona Beach enroute to Baltimore soon joined me at the table. He had boarded at DeLand and hopes to see passenger service restored to his home city within his lifetime. The food and service were good. Neither of us ever saw a check but were given receipts so I trust everything was handled properly. While I was in the diner, the conductor made a long announcement about the delay and added that connections would be protected to the extent possible. "The signals on the CSX freight railroad were dark for 50 miles."

Train 90, the southbound Palmetto, was in the Richmond station when we arrived; it departed just about on time enroute to MIA. Richmond is a traditional leg stretching stop and the crew watered the cars during the layover. In the past station personnel did this but now the car attendants and dining car chef perform the task. I noticed some beautiful photo locations in wooded areas south of Richmond as well as north of there on the former RF&P; hopefully I'll get back for some further "on the ground" activity in this area. The weather outside was beautiful with deep blue sky and about 50 degrees. The ride up the RF&P was quite fast; we ran "left handed" up Track 3 with no delays. The train would have reached Union Station by 4pm but was held outside the tunnel for an outbound VRE train. As we pulled in at 4:13 the equipment for #29, my Capitol Limited was being backed on to four freight cars across the platform.

About 5pm an announcement was made that Train 29's boarding would be delayed. It opened about 5:15 and the three of us soon were comfortably seated in the Chicago coach after negotiating with the car attendant for better seats and switching the cushion of my seat. The train looked good and consisted of Engine 123 pulling 3 Superliner coaches, a Sightseer Lounge car, dining car, two sleepers, a transition sleeper, baggage car and 4 freight cars. Departure came at 5:44 (due 5:20) only a few minutes after Train 91's departure across the platform. The Capitol's first coach was used for Pittsburgh and Cleveland riders, the second mostly for Toledo/Detroit people and the third just for Chicago passengers. The coaches had empty seats but the sleepers were full with over 70 patrons. We adjourned to the Sightseer Lounge and were told a dining car employee would pass through to make dinner reservations. When she finally arrived, she had openings only for the 9pm sitting as the sleeper passengers understandably get first choice. I thought a Superliner diner could seat about 70 but assume the car was not

(continued on page 23)

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS



White Pass and Yukon's freshly overhauled 2-8-2 No. 73 executes a spectacular photo runby over a small creek at milepost 55 in Yukon Territory on June 5, 2003. This excursion for Trains Unlimited Tours, Inc. was the first trip for the locomotive since its overhaul, which was a three-day charter that covered the entire 67-mile line from Carcross, Yukon Territory to Skagway, Alaska. Numerous photo runbys were held during the trip in scenic, inaccessible locations. Following this trip, No. 73 began working on regularly-scheduled weekend trips between Skagway and Bennett, for the 2003 season.—Alex Mayes.

Amtrak continues to show favorable performance results. Here are the ridership and financial figures for the fiscal year to date, Oct 03-Jun 04:

Ridership:
Budget: 18,429,707
Actual: 18,712,069
Total Operating Expenses:
Budget: $2,327,952,000
Actual: $2,265,887,000
Total Operating Revenue:
Budget: $1,402,187,000
Actual: $1,425,657,000

Here are the corresponding figures for the previous year's period:

Ridership:
Budget: 17,431,555
Actual: 17,698,980
Total Expenses:
Budget: $2,511,077,000
Actual: $2,387,618,000
Total Operating Revenue:
Budget: $1,658,968,000
Actual: $1,564,248,000

Year-to-year comparison of actuals only, 2004 changes from 2003:

Ridership: increased by about a million passengers, or 6%.

Expenses: decreased by about $122 million, or about 5%.

Revenue: decreased by about $139 million, or about 9%.

—Gene Poon, Norman Wilson, Amtrak.

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On Friday, June 11 Amtrak marked the 75th anniversary of the Empire Builder train. For the occasion, the westbound train was a special affair. Aboard was Amtrak President David Gunn, who rode the entire route. The train's consist was reversed to accommodate Amtrak business car 10001 and former GN Great Dome 10031, Amtrak's last remaining dome car.

The train was led by engine #7, appropriate for train 7, followed by #31, which would take the Portland section of the train on after it split at Spokane. The Portland section, a sleeper and two coaches and a lounge, was behind the two locos and baggage car. Then followed the Seattle cars: two coaches, diner, two sleepers and transition dorm, followed by the 10031 and 10001.

Because of this oddball train makeup, Amtrak ran a separate mail train, #877, from Chicago to Minneapolis, which consisted of engine 196, a deadhead coach and seven mail cars, some empty.

In business car 10001, David Gunn granted interviews to the rail media. Stan Brandt of the 20th Century RR Club reported that Gunn remarked that if he was forced to discontinue a single long-distance train, he would resign. Those present called it a wonderful day.

In 1979, when the Builder reached 50 years, the anniversary date was considered to be June 10 (1929). The reason is unclear, but that date may have been the train's inaugural run, while June 11 was the first revenue run.

In RTN 190 Brian Cutter reported that on June 10, 1979, a Sunday, Amtrak train 7 left Chicago with 203 passengers on board, 12mins late at 11:42am from track 15.

The dining car crew put on a great show in ex-GN Empire Builder diner 8068, previously named "Lake Wenatchee", Amtrak's only such diner then in service. There was a 3-foot long red, white and blue cake and much Almaden champagne.

The train lost some time along the way, but reached Seattle 13mins early.

Eastbound train 8 of June 10, 1979 had a much simpler celebration, serving champagne as long as it lasted.

In the fall of 1979 the Empire Builder began using Superliner cars.

• • •

Texas Eagle, northbound train 22 of June 20 broke in two south of Carlinville, IL, between sleeper 32007 and coach 34099. Cars were separated about 500 feet after stopping. The train was operating under power and no rough track or debris strike was noted. No damage to air hoses or HEP cables. Train was recoupled, stretched twice, air test done, and it proceeded with an hour's delay. —Gene Poon.

The Silver Star southbound derailed three wheels of its lead locomotive in Auburndale FL at 4:30pm July 8 while on a curve under a freeway overpass, about to switch tracks. Speed was 10 mph. There were no injuries, and passengers were transferred to buses. While the derailment was a minor one, some passengers were delayed 6hrs and there were complaints that Amtrak did not inform them of what was happening. The conductor blamed the incident on faulty CSX tracks.

Amtrak's credit rating improved when Standard & Poor raised it from BBB-minus to BBB on July 14, saying Amtrak's outlook is "stable" and its financial position improved.

New York Times July 11 & 12 published a major front-page story charging railroads, and Union Pacific in particular, of trying to avoid responsibility for grade-crossing fatalities by hiding evidence.

Said the Times, "Union Pacific's conduct is a stark example of how some railroads, even as they blame motorists, repeatedly sidestep their own responsibility in grade-crossing fatalities. Their actions range from destroying, mishandling or simply losing evidence to not reporting the crashes properly in the first place, a seven-month investigation by The New York Times has found.

"Union Pacific stands out. In one recent 18-month period, seven federal and state courts imposed sanctions on Union Pacific, the nation's biggest railroad, for destroying or failing to preserve evidence in crossing accidents, and an eighth court ordered a case retried. One sanction has since been overturned on appeal."

UP shot back, vehemently denying the charges or explaining their actions.

Amtrak dismissed its chief of its police department in early July without publicly stating the reason. An anonymous Amtrak official also told the media that Amtrak's police department has only 325 security officials, most of them in management—not enough to cover the entire system. On July 6 Amtrak appointed Alfred J. Broadbent as new VP of corporate security. He had been with the DC police dept.

The moral of this story might be: even though your train is very late, don't complain aloud in terms that might be mistaken for words of a terrorist. On the chronically-late Coast Starlight of May 17 northbound, a woman passenger reportedly said the

train crew should be shot, and that she would make a bomb threat. When the train reached Portland 5 1/4hrs late, she and her male companion were arrested.

Amtrak funding won't be settled in Congress before Sep at the earliest. During August, legislators will be in their home territories, campaigning. Sen Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) told the press in mid-July that he expects that Amtrak will be "preserved" but at a funding level less than Amtrak requested. He thought $1.2 billion would be a likely figure. Amtrak wants at least $1.5 billion, plus $100 million to repay its loan from the feds. Grassley's figure is a compromise between Amtrak's request and the Administration's offer of $900 million (which to Amtrak is a "shutdown" level). The House Appropriations Committee has approved only $800 million, plus $100 million for the DOT loan repayment. Said NARP, "Anything less than the current level of $1.218 billion could precipitate a crisis."

If Grassley's assessment is accurate, Amtrak will be required to stumble along again on less than an optimal amount needed to put the system in good shape.

NARP pointed out that candidates for legislative offices, not just incumbents, should hear strong support for Amtrak from rail advocates: "Even though 'non-incumbents' would not take office until next year (and then only if they win!), their willingness to speak up for Amtrak now can have an impact on how hard incumbents work to save the nation's passenger railroad."

Congressional agreement on a new TEA-21 bill is not going well. And to compound the problem, anti-rail Congressman Istook, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, is casting his abundant negativity onto transit. Explained NARP, "The Committee's transit [funding] level—$7.249 billion—is a $16 million reduction from FY04, and would mean the third straight year of essentially flat funding for transit. 'New starts' (primarily rail) are preserved only by using rescissions—money previously allocated to projects that have not been implemented; this funding 'method' will not be sustainable in the future.

Continued NARP, "Given the continuing failure of House-Senate conferees to agree on a new TEA-21 bill, the risk grows that Istook's rail-hostile approach to transportation will become law, by virtue of 'his' appropriations bill getting enacted before TEA-21." And there's more: the committee increased highway funding to $34.6 billion, $1 billion more than the White House's request and the FY04 level.

A Senate vote on Amtrak funding will not come before Labor Day (Sep 6), and NARP noted a "real possibility of President Bush signing a single bill—a continuing resolution for transportation and most other appropriations bills, and yet another TEA-21 extension. [July 22] Congress approved the latest TEA-21 extension, which reauthorizes highways through Sep 24 and transit and other programs through Sep 30.

Pro-Amtrak letter to House and Senate appropriators has been worked up, and nearly half of the nation's governors have signed it. NARP said that three notable states' governors have not yet signed it: those from California, Michigan and NY. Also, among Senators, a pro-Amtrak letter is circulating for signatures, the deadline now being Aug 11.

• • •

The Sunset Limited's chronic lateness continues so badly that Amtrak has decided to set a new policy regarding through cars from that train to the Texas Eagle. If train 2 is between one and three hours late, Amtrak will bus passengers from El Paso to San Antonio to board the Texas Eagle. If over 3 hours late, they will be bused from El Paso to Dallas. These changes are meant to ensure on-time departures of the northbound Texas Eagle from San Antonio.

Amtrak's Chief Mechanical Officer, Jonathan Klein, a person brought in by David Gunn, resigned abruptly in July with little comment from Amtrak. Appointed to replace him was his deputy, Vincent Nesci. Amtrak continues to experience an unwanted large number of mechanical problems with its equipment and is not making notable progress in getting repaired cars back onto the rails (partly due to insufficient funding).

News in this issue is updated through July 31, 2004. Contributors to this issue not otherwise identified include Robert Abraham, Howard Bender, Glen Lee, Ken Maylath, Gene Poon, Ray Saunders, Barry Steinberg, Ed Von Nordeck and Walter Zullig.

Amtrak fired its Police Chief in early July—Earnest R. Frazier Sr. Amtrak did not comment on the reasons, but said it has security problems because it has only 325 security officials for the whole system, and most of them are managers. Amtrak also appointed Alfred J. Broadbent, from the DC police, as VP for national security.

Amid security concerns, railroad people bumble on, looking at messages posted in restrooms and the like. Though it seems unlikely that Al Qaeda would tip Americans off to its planned activities via scrawlings in public lavatories, any more than it would gather information on infrastructure through standing on rail platforms wearing engineers' caps festooned with railroad buttons and taking railfan photos of passing trains, rail police seem determined to take seriously any tiny noncomforming activity they spot, regardless of relevance to terrorism.

On July 22 a northbound Amtrak train was stopped in Newark after someone found a note in a train restroom with anti-Semitic statements on it. The Boston-bound train was held for 90mins and all 450 passengers were videotaped and their full identification including Social Security numbers, was taken. Bomb-sniffing dogs were taken through the cars. There were, as usual, no arrests.

On July 3 the northbound Silver Star was stopped for a search at Washington after a painted message in Arabic that might have made references to "Washington", "Fourth of July" and "death" was spotted. Reports were contradictory whether the message was in a station restroom in Orlando or on the side of the train. (See also Quotes of the Week, p.22)

On July 6 the eastbound Empire Builder received several telephoned bomb threats. The train was halted in Wisconsin and 6.5 hours spent searching it. Later, in Chicago, a passenger on the train, a 35-year old man from Alaska, was arrested as the perpetrator after his cell phone number was traced. Amtrak bomb threats were common in the 1970s.

All Amtrak trains except Auto Train will be non-smoking Nov 1. The last three holdouts were Crescent, Silver Star and Silver Meteor. Auto Train has effective smoking rooms.

EXPRESS ADS

2004 New England Railroading Calendar—25th edition features 12 8x10 full color prints plus 2 cover pages @ $8 postpaid of frameable calendar pictures (our choice) 12/$3. Domestic orders only. Mystic Valley Railway Society, PO Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0009. Allow 2-4 weeks delivery. www.mysticvalleyrs.org

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MIDWEST REPORT

Democratic National Convention ended July 29 and at once the news reported that Demo candidates Kerry and Edwards would ride a campaign train starting Aug 5 from St. Louis to Arizona on the BNSF Southwest Chief route. The Amtrak special was to be arranged by RailCruise America and consist of private cars for the politicos and Amtrak cars for the press and others. An ex-PRR biz car used by former presidents was to provide a rear open platform.

The Hiawatha Line, Minneapolis' new light rail line, began regular service Jun 28. On Jun 26-27 free rides were given. The line begins in the downtown, serving businesses, a government complex, the Humphrey dome stadium and a VA hospital. In Dec, the line should open to the airport and Mall of America, which involves a tunnel under airport runways and direct terminal access. The present 24 Bombardier cars are 94ft long and seat 66, with standing room for 100. Top operating speed is 55mph. A dozen stations are now operational. At one time the Twin Cities boasted over 500 mis of line, some of which stretched far into the suburbs. The last car to run, in Jun 1954, was preserved and is part of a museum operation on one miles of original tracks, the Como-Harriet Line.—Ken Maylath.

Newton KS station's owner in early July abruptly began squeezing Amtrak into a smaller area, eliminating its baggage room entirely and reducing the size of the waiting room.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Sep 4-5: Elgin, Joliet & Eastern. Chicago to Rondout, Waukegan, reverse to Joliet; Chi. overnite; Joliet, Gary, Forest Park ex-Milw-Chi. $1950. Only 3 cars. High Iron Travel, Box 337 Waunakee WI 53597 highirontravel.com

Oct 16: Putnam Express P&W excur train via Blackstone R Valley to Putnam CT, antique center of NE Ct. Buffet lunch in old sta, optional Tafts tunnel trip. $45 RT. Mystic Valley Rwy Soc, Box 365486, Hyde Park MA.

Oct 16,17,23,24: 4 trips New River train in WV. Huntington-St Albans WV to entire 65-mi New River gorge. Atk equip + priv coaches,lounges,open-platform car. $89 up. CP Huntington RHS, Box 451 Kenova WV 25530.

Dec 11: 34th Street Express Amtrak Acela Special Boston,Rte 128,Providence, then express to NYP RT. Optional Radio City Xmas Spec or tour lower Manhattan. $95. Mystic Valley Rwy Soc (see above) 617-361-4445.

Dec 20: Special Train to Santa. "North Pole Express. Special P&W train decorated, 1pm or 4pm deps on 2-hour trip from 75 Hammond St, Worcester MA. $20. Mystic Valley Rwy Soc, Box 365486 Hyde Park MA 02136. See above

Dec 31-Jan 1: New England New Year 2005. Fitchburg MA, train & bus to Royal Plaza Hotel, 5-course dinner, classic 40s-60s orch. Midnight baked Alaska. $135 Mystic Valley Rwy Soc, mysticvalleyrs.org (see also above).

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 or e-mail to rtn@trainweb.com

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"'For someone who's on welfare and is trying to get into the private job market, the shortest route is one with four wheels,' says John Charles, senior policy analyst at the Cascade Institute in Portland, Ore. 'Car ownership has a huge effect on someone's employability. To see these transit bureaus spending $60,000 to $70,000 a mile on light rail that serves mostly the rich, it's immoral.'"

—Quoted by David Nicklaus in St. Louis Post-Dispatch July 14.

"WASHINGTON—An Amtrak train on its way from Miami to New York was stopped at Union Station on Saturday after Arabic-looking graffiti was [sic] spotted on its side, News4 reported."

—nbc4.com, July 3.

(There probably were Arabic numerals on the side of each car!)

HOLLYWOOD FL TO SEATTLE AND RETURN

(continued from page 17)

not sufficiently staffed to use its full capacity. Not wanting to eat at such a late hour, we elected to get sandwiches in the lounge car, which was "fresh out" of two items already. So we enjoyed our food and drinks while watching the scenery along the Potomac between Harper's Ferry and Cumberland.

The next morning the Capitol continued at good speed despite the frequent NS freight trains in the area. At South Bend the former South Shore station is used while the South Shore itself turns north for the airport station about a half mile west. The ride through the Chicago area went faster than on some previous trips and we headed into Union Station exactly one hour late at 11:25am

April 17: (After a layover) To our surprise the Empire Builder was posted to leave from Track 30 on the south side of the station. The waiting room there was quite full, as our train and the California Zephyr would be departing within 20 minutes of each other. Since the diner wouldn't be serving lunch, my companions headed for a "Subway" sandwich shop near the station while I patronized the Arches upstairs. We carried our lunches on to the train for later consumption.

The Builder made an impressive sight and consisted of two Genesis locos, a baggage car, transition sleeper, sleeper, diner, two coaches, Sightseer lounge, 2 coaches, sleeper, private car "Caritas", 4 ExpressTrak freight cars and 4 RoadRailers in that order. The cars up to the Sightseer lounge were destined to Seattle with the rear of the train being the Portland section to be removed at Spokane. There was something different about this train. Not only did it look good but the crews were full of enthusiasm and eager to make the riders feel welcome.

We were directed to the second coach that would become the last car out of Spokane. Bonnie, our most friendly female attendant, told my companions to take any seats marked for "Families" and suggested I take one across the aisle marked for "single travelers." The conductor and car attendant working together did the ticket collection in a most professional way. He would state the destination and she would issue the seat check. In my book that's how it always should be done. We then adjourned to the Sightseer lounge to begin to enjoy the ride. Later the dining car chief passed through with reservations; we had to eat at 5pm, as the other two sittings already were full. I had the seared salmon with a baked potato, veggies and salad. The service was fast and the meal excellent. We later returned to the lounge car to view the crossing of the Mississippi near LaCrosse, WI, at sunset.

April 18: I awoke as the train was in the depot at Fargo, ND, at 3:55am. At this hour there was a good crowd on the platform outside the brick building. Back to sleep upon our 8 minute late departure and woke up at 7am before arrival at Rugby, ND, the geographical center of North America. Outside the scene had changed to open prairie and abandoned houses.

April 18: The coldness briefly awoke me about 4AM but I was back to sleep after putting on my jacket. Final awakening came about 6:30 with the "dining car now is open" announcement. At this point the train was winding through some magnificent scenery in the Cascades. Outside it was cool and rainy. Our final breakfast this trip was served by a jovial waitress who set a table when she saw us coming.

At Edmonds I detrained to catch the 10:10 ferry to Kingston where a friend would meet me. As the train moved along the scenic Puget Sound I said goodbye to my traveling companions and to Bonnie, one of Amtrak's finest car attendants. Arrival at Edmonds was at 9:12, only 4mins late, after a really magnificent transcontinental trip. (More next issue)

LETTERS

I enjoyed reading the Blishaks' travel account in RTN 661. I am a UP freight conductor in the Pacific Northwest and am frequently astounded at the way Amtrak trains are treated. We find that no. 14, the Coast Starlight, is usually hours late when we have to meet it, and although it customarily gets even later when it is on our subdivision, I had always assumed it was already late when we received it. Thus, it was most interesting to read that it was actually on time at Klamath Falls when the Blishaks' trip began.

We often see slow drags sent out ahead of Amtrak trains, and even trains that have setouts or pickups en route sent out ahead of Amtrak, forcing Amtrak to wait while they do their switching. Meets such as you encountered where Amtrak trains have to back into sidings behind other trains are quite common. We have even heard dispatchers asking Amtrak crews to watch shoves by UP freights. The track improvements at Brooklyn that were supposed to enable faster Amtrak operations are often used to store dead trains and have themselves become a bottleneck. The official excuse that there is a crew shortage is only part of the problem. As you point out, there are other contributing factors.

Of course, it isn't just the Starlight that is affected. The Portland-Eugene Talgos are seriously delayed too, sometimes up to four hours. Starlight passengers might expect some delays on a long-haul run, but delays are not acceptable to corridor passengers, where on-time performance is critical. It was not surprising to read that Cascades ridership has fallen, and I am surprised the drop has not been greater. My unofficial experience would indicate Cascades trains on UP are on time only 20% of the time.

One would think Amtrak or the Oregon DOT would be squaking about this performance, but apparently they are not. I once asked an Amtrak conductor if they document the delays they encounter. He said he documents every delay and turns them in daily, but not once had anyone ever asked him about his reports or requested more details in a followup.

Name withheld.

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(Letter to Amtrak:) I am writing with both compliments and criticisms—unfortunately mostly criticisms—of the handing of train 49, the Lake Shore Ltd, that departed NY on Jan 15, 2004 and arrived nearly 13hrs late in Chicago on Jan 16.

In the course of the trip, all rest rooms on the train failed, raw sewage from the toilets slopped over onto the floors, the dining car had to cease operations because there was no water, there was extensive snow in vestibules combined with wet and slippery conditions in halls adjacent to the vestlibules, and salt tracked through the cars. The heat failed in my car for a time, although it was restored. Even most efforts on the part of Amtrak to mitigate the problems were handled poorly.

Excuses were given attributing problems to weather conditons. However, I formerly traveled extensively by rail and never encountered conditions such as these on any train I rode even in weather conditions far more severe in the Western US than what was encountered on this trip...

At South Bend, passenger agents boarded and rode back to Chicago for the purpose of arranging overnight hotel accommodations and re-booking connections... I also wish to criticize your passenger agents in Chicago Union Station. I suggested that it would be most appreciated if Amtrak were to arrange a complimentary upgrade in my accommodations between Chicago and Kansas City to a sleeping car room. I pointed out that rooms frequently run empty from Chicago to Kansas City... After all, I had endured a train with no functioning toilets, raw sewage overflowing onto the floors, a train running nearly 13hrs late, etc. Also, I would have to miss a day's work on Sat, Jan 17 because no train from Chicago would arrive in K.C. before the time I was supposed to arrive... Their response was that they could not offer any space because they had to keep it available for through passengers... Nonetheless, sosmeone arranged for me to secure unsold, empty space from Chicago to K.C.—at full fare, of course...

Given the fact that I had just gotten off the worst trip that I have ever experienced and missed a day of work, I was surprised by your position that if I wanted to travel in an otherwise empty room, that I could pay full fare...

Dave Peironnet
Kansas City, Missouri.

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